

# From the “Intrepid Sultan” to the “Red Sultan”

*The long journey of the semantic shift in the French media*



Le Sultan Abdul-Hamid II

| Dessin de Henri Mavua (photographie Abdullah). — Voir l'article, page 211.

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# **From the “Intrepid Sultan” to the “Red Sultan”, the long journey of the semantic shift in the French media**

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# From the “Intrepid Sultan” to the “Red Sultan”, the long journey of the semantic shift in the French media

## The French Press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

After 1871, the whole of Europe, except the Balkans, enjoyed a long period of peace which brought great prosperity. This economic development went hand in hand, with the progress of the public education and democracy; a considerable clientele thus was offered to the newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

The Press became a real industry. The profession of journalist and news agencies appeared. A popular press, rich in satirical cartoons and caricatures, was developing. During this period, it experienced a considerable boom supported by technical progress such as the invention of the rotary press (1860), the French law on freedom of the press (1881), the means of communication and transport. The sale of newspapers progressed considerably, thanks to literacy and lower prices. Paid advertising provided money, paper became cheaper, new machines could produce mass newspapers. In Paris, the daily circulation of newspapers increased from 36,000 in 1800, to one million in 1870.<sup>2</sup>

Appearing in the wake of the daily newspapers, the weeklies contributed to the rise of an illustrated press, then satirical. Politicians of all sides used the weekly in a privileged way for the purposes of opinions and propaganda, even of pedagogy: less focused on the immediate news, the weeklies allowed short reports and feature articles. With the increase of the public and the competition of the newspapers, new topics became essential in the headings: sport, fashion, leisure, voyage or adventures. Thematic weeklies were multiplying when photography literally took hold of this medium.<sup>3</sup>

This “Golden Age”<sup>4</sup> of the press (1870-1914) has aroused our interest in analysing how the French press perceived the Ottoman Empire and its ruler. To make it simple, we propose to examine how the Sultan Abdulhamid II was seen from Paris.

## Methodology of Survey

Our survey covers a period of 42 years, from Abdulhamid’s accession to the throne in 1876, until his death in 1918. In a wide panel of 25 titles of the French press<sup>5</sup>, we selected 89 articles targeted on our subject, of which we analysed the narrative in full text format<sup>6</sup>, and translated as is.

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<sup>1</sup> SORIEUL (Sophia) and SORIEUL (Sylvain), « Presse illustrée. Les journaux illustrés du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle », *Le Petit Journal - Supplément Illustré*, [s.d.]. URL : <http://www.supplement-illustre-du-petit-journal.com/histoire-presse-illustree.html>. Consulté le 3 septembre 2018.

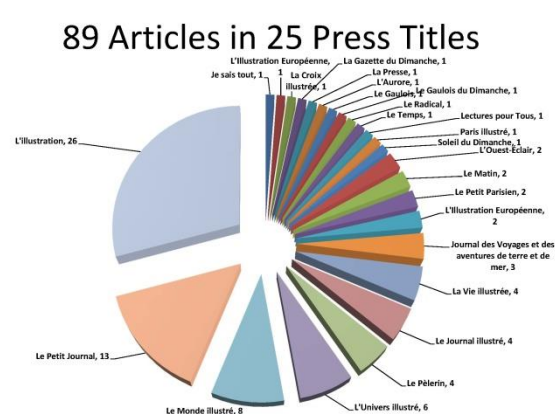
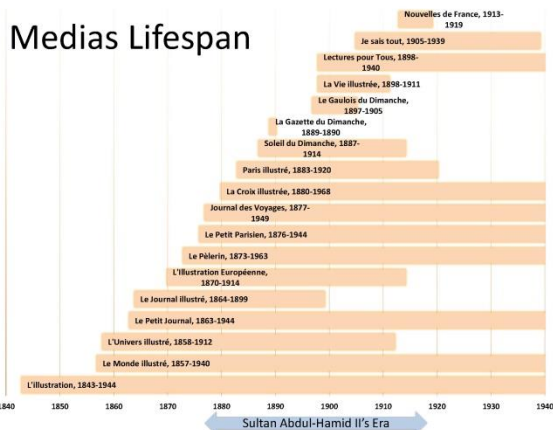
<sup>2</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF Gallica). « *La presse au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* ».

<sup>3</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF Gallica). « *Hebdomadaires et presse magazine* ».

<sup>4</sup> WEILL, Georges. *Le Journal. Origines, évolution et rôle de la presse périodique*, Renaissance du livre, Paris, 1934, Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. L’Évolution de l’humanité, 1 vol.

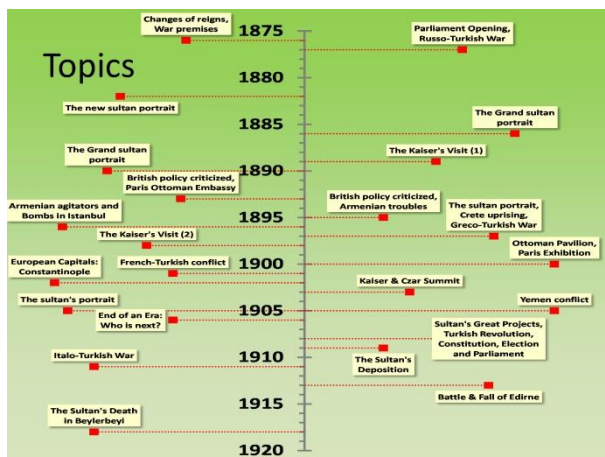
<sup>5</sup> By alphabetical order: *Je sais tout* (1), *L’Illustration Européenne* (1), *La Croix illustrée* (1), *La Gazette du Dimanche* (1), *La Presse* (1), *L’Aurore* (1), *Le Gaulois* (1), *Le Gaulois du Dimanche* (1), *Le Radical* (1), *Le Temps* (1), *Lectures pour Tous* (1), *Paris Illustré* (1), *Soleil du Dimanche* (1), *L’Ouest-Éclair* (2), *Le Matin* (2), *Le Petit Parisien* (2), *L’Illustration Européenne* (2), *Journal des Voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer* (3), *La Vie Illustrée* (4), *Le Journal Illustré* (4), *Le Pèlerin* (4), *L’Univers Illustré* (6), *Le Monde Illustré* (8), *Le Petit Journal* (13), *L’Illustration* (26).

<sup>6</sup> The length of the text is an average of 1,050 words per article, with a maximum of 5,893 words.

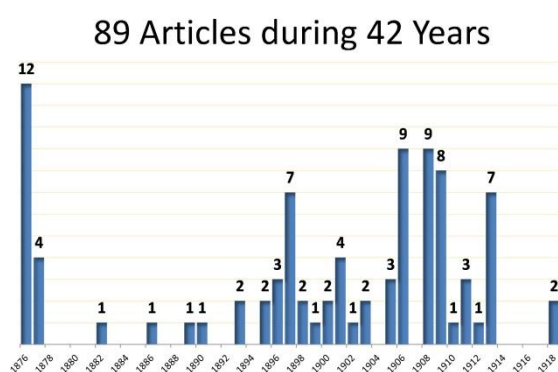


## Topics Outlined

Let us proceed with a quick overview of the topics tackled by the press.



The Ottoman Empire underwent major upheavals in the years 1876-78. Sixteen articles were published; they concerned the deposition of Sultan Abdul-Aziz and his tragic end, the attack against the government, the accession of Murad V to the throne followed by his illness and his deposition, the proclamation of Abdulhamid as Sultan and his inauguration ceremony, the early signs of imminent war, the proclamation of the constitution and the opening of the Ottoman Parliament, and finally the Russo-Turkish war in the Balkans and the Caucasus.



A series of four articles were devoted to the “Portrait of the Sultan” between 1882 and 1897. The Kaiser's visit in 1889 was entitled to an article, followed by a critique of British policy (1893-95), and the description of the Ottoman Embassy in Paris (1893). Four articles dealt with the Armenians insurgency (1895-96) then, in 1897, six articles with Crete turmoil and the Greco-Turkish war.

The press devoted two articles to the second visit of the Kaiser (1898), then three to the Ottoman pavilion of the Paris Exposition (1899-1900). In 1901, the Franco-Turkish conflict was in the

spotlight, followed by a series of articles on “European capitals: Constantinople” (1902), then by the Czar-Kaiser summit (1903), finally by the troubles in Yemen.

Eleven articles were devoted to the security and health of Abdulhamid (1905-06). 1908 is a year of upheaval; the topics dealt with the Hejaz Railway, the Sultan’s portrait and end of an era (2), the Turkish revolution, the Constitution restoration, the parliamentary elections and the opening of the



Parliament (6). The Sultan's deposition in 1909 and Reshad proclaimed new sultan are described in nine articles.

Finally, the death of Abdulhamid will be entitled to two articles in 1918.

## Press Perceptions and Reactions

We identified three periods characterised by the Press perception and its appreciation. The first is defined by the “Promising Hopes” (from the Changes of reigns in 1876 to the Kaiser’s visit), the second, by a “Growing Exasperation” (from 1889 until the French-Turkish conflict), and finally the third, as “Anger and Rage” (from 1901 until the Sultan’s death in 1918).

### 1. Promising Hopes

Since his accession to the throne, Abdul-Hamid has immediately raised promising hopes in the French press. This state of grace will last a dozen years, until its rapprochement with the German Emperor, Wilhelm II and, in particular, until the first official visit of the latter to Constantinople.

After the inauguration of the new sultan, *Le Journal Illustré* found, with caution, that “to the ghost-sultan named Mourad V, succeeded a monarch full of life, Abdul-Hamid” who “if he does not let his intelligence and energy evaporate with the perfumes of the harem, can still become a great prince, and save an empire crumbling on all sides”.

For its part, *Le Monde Illustré* also bases the same hopes on the new Sultan and expresses the wish that he may “usher in an era of pacification and moderation for the future”.

Considered “intelligent, energetic, and not hostile to reform”<sup>7</sup>, “the new Sultan is very strong physically, thanks to gymnastic exercises in which he excels; he is thought to be very learned, especially in history and geography, sciences he cultivates with passion, as well as mechanics. He would have French quite well, by means of which he studied our Revolution. There was talk of sending him to study at our *École Polytechnique*, but this project was not implemented.”<sup>8</sup>

From the point of view of character, *Le Monde Illustré* describes him as “a very strong character in his ideas, holding much of his grandfather Mahmoud the reformer. So we build some hope on the new sovereign”.<sup>9</sup>

*L’Univers Illustré* describes his piety and notes that “the successor of Mourad V practices his religion with ardour... Every day, the Sultan will make his prayer, either at the shrine of the Prophet, or the tomb of Mahomet II the ‘Conqueror’. On the fifteenth day of Ramazan, he went to Top-Capu, and he ordered that the Hirkai-Sherif (the Prophet's mantle) be exposed to the veneration of Muslims, until the day before the Bairam. The ceremony was held with great fanfare”.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, according to *Le Journal Illustré*, it would be “this young man whom the madness of Mourad and the dramatic end of Abdul-Azis have recently called to rule a difficult people and to hold, high and firm, the banner of Mahomet. Abdul-Hamid is intrepid, and his manifesto is, in no way, inferior to that of the emperor of all the Russias, his formidable adversary”.<sup>11</sup>

This is the picture painted by the press, in a series of articles entitled “Portraits of the Sultan”.

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<sup>7</sup> *L’Univers Illustré* 1876-09-09.

<sup>8</sup> *Le Monde Illustré* 1876-09-09.

<sup>9</sup> *Le Monde Illustré* 1876-09-09, *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *L’Univers Illustré* 1876-10-21.

<sup>11</sup> *Le Journal Illustré* 1877-05-06.

It will be necessary to wait until 1908, *e.g.* one year before his deposition, for the weekly *L'Illustration*, and in its long report<sup>12</sup> entitled “The Railway of Islam”, to express its admiration for “this moribund Turk, this legendary ‘insolvent’”, both for the ingenious arrangement of funding, and the difficulties of the project. The narrative considers that “the example of this railway presents for France a particular interest in the obligation where it is found to connect the Algerian provinces... with Senegal”. The reporter emphasizes on the benefits to Muslim pilgrims (*e.g.* expenses divided by five, and delays, by four), and he draws his conclusion by highlighting the sacred purpose, and the religious, political and economic importance of the “Hamidié Railway of Hejaz” as follows: “The caliph, by endowing the holy places with the means of communication in relation to the present century, has thus made, for the great Islamic family, a work of considerable utility, by rendering the pilgrimage accessible to the mass”.<sup>13</sup>

As for the Sultan’s political doctrine, it will be summed up in an article devoted to his death, in 1918: “His aims went so far as to dream of the return to the Turkish empire, of all the countries separated from Islam; emissaries were going to preach this doctrine wherever Mohammedan groups lived: it was a dull and continual agitation in North and Central Africa, in Asia as far as India and among the Muslims of China; this propaganda was his ‘Secret service’, his personal policy: to spread panislamism.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Growing Exasperation

The warning signs of annoyance in the press appeared for the first time in 1882, in the sixth year of his reign. The reasons were the tension created by the turmoil in Egypt, between Britain and France, on the one hand, and the Ottoman state, on the other, about Egypt. Preceding for a month exactly the British bombardment of Alexandria, *Le Journal Illustré* expressed his irritation by writing: “Abdul-Hamid II... is one of the main heroes of the tragedy whose events are currently taking place in the East. The Porte Government has opposed... the Conference meeting, to put an end to the turmoil in Egypt. Believing himself master of the situation, the sultan intends to stand up to Europe, and add a new mystification to all those of which Europeans have been victims for a few years. But it is important that revenge be drawn from the massacres, and with a little firmness we will know... to overcome the ill-will of Abdul-Hamid”.<sup>15</sup>

After this Anglo-Egyptian war – actually a nationalist uprising supported by the Sultan – there ensued a period of respite in the press; it will last four years.

It will be *La Gazette du Dimanche* which will show, in 1886, its criticism of the Sultan's governance and his rapprochement with Russia: “It was claimed that Abd-ul-Hamid was a man at once energetic, persevering, enlightened, and a friend of progress. The truth is that the new Sultan has nothing that distinguishes him from most of his predecessors. His face, without character, bears the imprint of a degenerate race, much more than that of genius. His reign was somewhat disturbed (...) by the Turkish-Russian war. For a few years, the Sultan seemed to wish to place himself under the protectorate of England. But, at the time of writing, Abdul-Hamid and his advisers pretend to repudiate the interested friendship of the perfidious Albion, to engage in Russia. Is it not to jump out of the frying pan to fall into the fire?”.<sup>16</sup>

It was not until the Armenians insurgencies, in Istanbul and the Anatolian provinces, in 1895, that *Le Journal Illustré* wondered about the role of the Great Powers behind this rebellion. Abdul-Hamid is “at this moment the sovereign of whom one deals the most in Europe, because universal peace depends on the integrity of his empire... It seems difficult to believe that France and Russia give

<sup>12</sup> 2,709 words.

<sup>13</sup> *L'Illustration* 1908-03-14.

<sup>14</sup> *L'Illustration* 1918-02-16.

<sup>15</sup> *Le Journal Illustré* 1882-07-02.

<sup>16</sup> *La Gazette du Dimanche* 1886-10-31.



anything but peace councils to the Sultan. It seems unlikely that the 'Triple Alliance'<sup>17</sup> is pushing for war – although it has interfered very unexpectedly with the affairs of Armenia by asking to also supervise the Supervisory Board. So all that remains is England, which invented and especially staged the Armenian massacres, which organized the atrocities with a supreme art, which could have an interest in shuffling the cards. Russia and France will oppose killing Turkey. Abdul-Hamid Khan The great sultan has so far deserved all the sympathies of France.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1897, “the king of Greece, despite the injunctions of the powers, sent troops to Crete” to support the insurrection on the island. The Cretan spark will be the prelude to the Greco-Turkish war. *Le Petit Journal* reports that “serious events are happening right now in the East. Diplomacy strives to reach an understanding that, almost alone, prevents certain well-known greed. Abdul-Hamid, the ruler of so many peoples, the leader of the religion of the Muslims, (...) is a wise, educated and hard-working man; his mind, particularly cultivated, opens easily to modern ideas. Everything makes you hope (...) that the clouds will dissipate before long”.<sup>19</sup>

And *Le Petit Journal* will add a week later: “Abdul-Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, could well, after the events of which the East is currently the theatre, see his power in danger. His deceitful and barbaric policy has tired the European Powers. Everyone recognizes the need to remedy the current state of affairs, in all the provinces subjected to the brutality of the Turks”.<sup>20</sup>

In this Greco-Turkish war, the rapid and decisive victory of the Ottoman army, organized and formed by the Germans since 1882, accentuated this irritation. We thus see *L'Illustration* which devotes a long article entitled “the German leaders of the Turkish army”, and to write in the form of a joke: “Here, beer is German too...” It was Caran d'Ache who, the other day, uttered this exclamation in the mouth of a reporter, seated at a table full of mugs, in the middle of the Turkish camp, accompanied by officers booted and strapped to the Prussian, Prussians from the shoe to the hairstyle... exclusively, Turks only by the fez”.<sup>21</sup>

The second visit of the Kaiser, in 1898, will be an opportunity to express this growing exasperation: “On the occasion of his pilgrimage to Palestine, H.M. Wilhelm II was the host of Abdul-Hamid Khan. Their Majesties have just met in Stamboul, where they have (...) offered to Europe the touching table of a pair of buddies... Here, the antithesis is alive. On one side, wearing handsome, the Kaiser (...) looks haughty and protective, of someone who is aware of his power. On the other side, a man with hunched shoulders, narrow bust, of mediocre size, of an undecided age to appearance (...): puny appearance, olive complexion, worried eye, flashing under a heavy eyelid. Such are, so different from their physiognomy, these two autocrats. Abdul-Hamid seems to be leaning confidently on the sturdy arm that broke Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor”.<sup>22</sup>

“The provisional goodbyes were most cordial, the emperor left Constantinople leaving his host struggling with the powers” and making “bitter reflections on the (...) uselessness, for him at least, of this rapprochement of which Germany alone will benefit”.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Anger and Rage

In the press, irritation will give way to anger, especially from the Franco-Turkish conflict in 1901; it concerns the concession of the quays of Constantinople and the claims of two French businessmen – MM. Lorando and Tubini – for the construction of railways: “The case of the quays of Constantinople,

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<sup>17</sup> The “Triple Alliance”, i.e. a secret agreement between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, formed on 20 May 1882.

<sup>18</sup> *Le Journal Illustré* 1895-11-17.

<sup>19</sup> *Le Petit Journal* 1897-02-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Le Petit Parisien* 1897-02-28.

<sup>21</sup> *L'Illustration* 1897-05-22.

<sup>22</sup> *L'Illustration* 1898-10-22.

<sup>23</sup> *La Vie Illustrée* 1898-11-03.

so simple in itself (...) has just caused the breaking of diplomatic relations between France and Turkey. This business question of money becomes a big political question that will, perhaps, lead to the entry of the Dardanelles French battleships. (...) this financial debate is turning to drama”.<sup>24</sup>

More radical with regard to this conflict which “broke out between France and the Great Bleeder”, *La Vie Illustrée* will suggest: “What France would have better to do, it would be to seize the quays. (...) Turkey is not a civilized power; it must not be treated as a civilized power. The Sultan shows intelligence only when it comes to... opposing the powers to each other”. And it added that France “breathed a sigh of relief when we learned that the ‘Sick Man’ was about to surrender... we were sending Admiral Cuillard's division to the East, to recover *manu militari*, the claims Lorando and Tubini, as one sends the police commissioner and his agents to assist the bailiff proceeding against an intractable and dangerous debtor”.<sup>25</sup>

Three months later, *La Vie Illustrée* will be more categorical, making the following observation: “To treat Turks, Chinese or Dahomeyans as civilized men, and to bond with them on beautiful treatises, is a childishness, similar to that of a kid who would have his cat sign a promise not to scratch him: we start by cutting the claws, it's safer. It is there that our marines raised the tricolour flag, to oblige the sultan, to bow before our will”.<sup>26</sup>

Contrary to the opinion of the periodical *La Presse* “that the Commander of the Faithful must never be sick”<sup>27</sup>, it is indeed “the health of Abdul-Hamid” and, in particular, his illness in 1906 that will trigger a series of articles in the press, with unprecedented virulence and extreme violence. It was like opening a Pandora's box! Already, three years earlier, *La Presse*, citing information from Vienna, reported that “there is a rumour that Sultan Abdul-Hamid would be sick.” And the year before, *Le Matin* headlined on the front page “Attack against the Sultan: A bomb at Constantinople”<sup>28</sup>, whence the Sultan came out unharmed.

The facts were however there: Friday, August 10, 1906, was the day of Selamlık, “the sultan had a bleeding”, then “fainted (...) and had to give it up then”. The newspaper *L'Aurore*, citing sources in Berlin, noted that “since his accession to the throne, it is the first time that Sultan Abdul-Hamid is so seriously ill”; despite official denials, “Professor Bergmann, (...) was telegraphed.”<sup>29</sup> Less than two months later, the Sultan recovered well, and the periodical *Le Radical* writes: “After a stay of six weeks in the Sultan's court, Professor Bier will leave tomorrow for Berlin.” The eminent physician declared in the *Frankfurt Gazette*, “that the state of health of the Sultan is at present entirely satisfactory in all respects. The news, constantly published in the newspapers, and according to which the Sultan Abdul Hamid would suffer from a very serious and even incurable kidney disease, are (...) pure tendentious inventions”. He added that he “considers it a duty to restore the truth by declaring loudly and publicly that the Sultan's illness was simply a catarrh of the bladder, even having a rather benign character.”<sup>30</sup>

The happy outcome of this illness was not enough to calm the wildest speculations. After 30 years of reign, “the repeated absence of the Sultan at the Selamlık ceremony” provoked hope for change among his antagonists. The periodical *L'Ouest-Éclair* noted that “Sultan Abdul Hamid's illness may soon open up a new era for the Hellenic Peninsula and the whole of the Levant”<sup>31</sup>, and the newspaper

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<sup>24</sup> *Le Journal des finances* 1901-10-12.

<sup>25</sup> *La Vie Illustrée* 1901-08-30.

<sup>26</sup> *La Vie Illustrée* 1901-11-15.

<sup>27</sup> *La Presse*, Paris 1903-11-04.

<sup>28</sup> *Le Matin* 1905-07-23.

<sup>29</sup> *L'Aurore* 1906-08-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Le Radical* 1906-10-24.

<sup>31</sup> *L'Ouest-Éclair* 1906-09-15.

*Le Matin* “according to the safest information”, headlined his article “Abdul-Hamid Incurable” and thus evoked “the death of the Commander of the believers”<sup>32</sup>.

By first describing him in *Le Monde Illustré* as “tall, thin, (...) dressed in a brown suit, covered with a navy overcoat with copper buttons; no diamond, no decorations; a beard too black because hue, frames his bony face, pale, with prominent cheekbones and cut in half by the long nose he holds of his Armenian mother”, Paul FESCH went so far as to say that “at first glance you cannot believe he's sick. At the observation, no longer doubts remain. Most definitely, this man is sick. He is condemned. And he knows it; and this shows from his part a certain energy, and does not lack some grandeur.”<sup>33</sup>

So, speculation will go well. The question of his succession arised in the media. The most far-fetched hypotheses will be constructed then. “In three months, Abdul-Hamid Khan II, the one whom Gladstone called ‘the Great Assassin’, will be dead. The most optimistic diagnoses do not concede him, at most, that this lapse of time, to succumb to the tubercular or cancerous disease that gnaws at him, and whose march, slow but certain, comes to an end. Who will succeed him?” And Paul FESCH, in *La Vie Illustrée* continues with the portrait of the presumptive inheritors to the throne: the princes Rechad, Yusuf-Izeddin, Suleyman, Vahd-ed-dine, Selah-ed-dine, Medjid and Selim, outlining their political and cultural inclination towards this or that Great Power.<sup>34</sup>

The popular illustrated magazine *Je sais tout*<sup>35</sup>, which had to its credit to publish, serial, the adventures of Arsène Lupin, will devote an 8-page long article<sup>36</sup>. With much detail, it will describe Abdulhamid's sad and reclusive childhood, the rejection of his father for him, the morbid jealousy to his brother Murad, and thus deduce the character traits as an adult: an “infinite sadness”, a “silent and melancholic”, “suspicious and cunning”, living “only by his nerves”, a follower of magic (“according to his custom, Abd-ul-Hamid, surrounded by wizards and magicians, was read the future”), apparently “charming” but a “relentless cruelty and an incurable defiance” (he would not have shot with a revolver a gardener who had risen abruptly), sometimes beset by “real hallucinations”, of extreme greed, concerned about his safety, feeling the “fear of death hovering over cease on him”, suffering from this “sickly state” of which “the night exasperates his terror”.

This article of *Je sais tout*, by its anecdotal content, was largely inspired by the book of Arminius Vambéry<sup>37</sup>, published two years before, and in which he relates his conversations with the Sultan. A keen connoisseur of Central Asia, this Hungarian Jewish orientalist, converted four times to Islam, was an agent of the Foreign Office<sup>38</sup>, nicknamed by his biographers the “Dervish of Windsor Castle”, he would have interceded with the Sultan to organize an audience to Theodor Herzl.

Continuing the momentum of the popular magazine *Je sais tout*, *La Vie Illustrée* will accentuate the cruel, even sadistic nature of the character, especially with regard to his family. Once, he would have surprised his eldest son, Prince Selim, leaning on a map, highlighting the Balkan provinces lost by the war of 1877; he “rushed at him, punched him, shouting, ‘Scoundrel! ... *Hinzir!* (that is to say, *Pig*) how dare you take care of such things?’” This violence against his son should not be surprising. It is customary because of it. He is commonly called the jailer, the executioner of his family. Acts of cruelty to his credit are countless and too well-known. One day, his sister Djemile-Sultane came “in

<sup>32</sup> *Le Matin* 1906-09-23.

<sup>33</sup> *Le Monde Illustré* 1906-10-20.

<sup>34</sup> *La Vie Illustrée* 1906-12-28.

<sup>35</sup> *Je sais tout* 1906-08-15.

<sup>36</sup> Text's length: 2,534 words.

<sup>37</sup> VÁMBÉRY (Ármin), *The story of my struggles: the memoirs of Arminius Vambéry*. (See Chapter XI. My Intercourse with Sultan Abdul Hamid, pp. 345-390), 2 vol., 1904<sup>e</sup> éd., New York, 1904. Internet Archive. URL : <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924071203933>. Consulté le 26 août 2018.

<sup>38</sup> CSIRKÉS (Ferenc), « National science and international politics in the work of Ármin Vámbéry », *Ármin Vámbéry (1832-1913), orientalist in dervish clothes*, [s.d.]. URL : <http://vambery.mtak.hu/en/12.htm>. Consulté le 28 août 2018.: “[Vámbéry] fulfilled tasks of confidential mediation, and sometimes of intelligence service on behalf of the British foreign policy”.

tears, begging her brother to return her husband” arrested for his participation in Abdul-Aziz assassination; “As the unfortunate lady, kneeling before the Sultan, did not want to get up, he kicked her with all his might, that broke her teeth: shortly after, Damad-Mahmoud Djellaleddin-Pasha was murdered in his prison”. And the magazine launches into a diatribe against his friendship with the Kaiser: “It is no secret that Wilhelm II, since only European monarchs he dared to put his hand gloved iron in the bloody hand and despised of Abdul-Hamid, became a friend of the latter. Whatever he wants, he gets it, for himself or for his country. Land concessions, railways, boats or guns, everything is to Germany”<sup>39</sup>.

Finally, at the death of Abdul-Hamid, *Le Pèlerin* will make his panegyric, in March 1918, calling him “hypocrite, a bloodthirsty being... the worst tyrants of all times, ... fierce and cruel, timid, pitiless”, of whom ‘Gladstone had called the Red Sultan’”, who “rose to power by duplicity”; the article will describe his policy “tortuous and sneaky. Falling under the tutelage of Wilhelm II, from 1889, the Commander of the believers was no more than a German governor”. And *Le Pèlerin* concludes: “Magnificence and Decadence! He dies the day after the capture of Baghdad and the return of Jerusalem to Christians!”<sup>40</sup>.

## Journalistic Practices and Influence on Further Publications

The analysis of the published narratives highlights two distinct journalistic practices, which differ in their ethics.

The first is that, of the majority of articles, two-thirds<sup>41</sup> of which are written by authors who have remained anonymous. They all come from a country that lives under a Republican regime (3<sup>rd</sup> Republic) and all are imbued with the revolutionary traditions of the French Revolution. Therefore they are ideologically hostile to any absolutist regime. As a result, they are unconditionally supportive of the cause of the Young Turk revolutionaries; admiring of them, they go so far as to idealize them. Although France has inherited a vast colonial empire, they also fundamentally support the nationalism and the revolt of the Serbs, Bulgarians, Cretans, etc., and are in favour of their liberation from the “Turkish yoke”. In their narratives, one notes how sensitive they are to the exteriorized signs of this French Revolution, which they describe with a certain lyricism: “our revolution”, the “tricolour” flag, the *Marseillaise*, and “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”. On international relations level, their attitude is expressed by disappointment and bitterness vis-à-vis the British (especially after 1882-Egypt), by benevolence to the Russians (since 1892), and by an outright hostility against Germany.

Although a minority, the second practice is more pernicious. It came to light in 1906, triggered by the sultan's illness. Apart from Paul Fesch and Gustave Babin, the other authors of this series of articles have remained anonymous. Inspired by Vámbéry's book and their unfailing support for the Young Turks, they will paint a work of fiction in their articles, a kind of pseudo-psychoanalysis of the Sultan, after 30 years of reign. They will dig in his childhood to identify the rejection of an indifferent father, and the syndrome of Cain<sup>42</sup> in his so-called tumultuous relations with his brother Murad. They have thus deduced and diagnosed, sometimes a paranoid delusion, sometimes pantophobia and

<sup>39</sup> *La Vie Illustrée* 1906-12-28.

<sup>40</sup> *Le Pèlerin* 1918-03-03.

<sup>41</sup> Less than one third of these articles are signed by their authors, under their own name or a pseudonym; the remaining two-thirds are written by anonymous authors or signed with initials. Here are the 23 identified journalists (the number of articles they published is between brackets): AXEL (1), Gustave BABIN (3), Christian BOREL (1), BROUSSET (1), Théodore CAHU (1), CARBONEL (1), Jean CARMANT (1), X. DACHÈRES (2), A. DARLET (1), E. F. (1), Paul FESCH (2), Léo HAMPOL [d'] (1), L. (1), Ernest LAUT (2), G. LENÔTRE (1), Anatole LEROY-BEAULIEU (1), Pierre LOTI (1), M. N. (2), Edmond NEUKOMM (2), PARTI SOCIAL FRANÇAIS (1), Youssouf RAZI (1), Georges RÉMOND (1), Aristide ROGER (2).

<sup>42</sup> VAN REETH (Claude) et SZONDI (Leopold), « Thanatos et Caïn. Au commencement de la culture », *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, vol. 68, no 99 (1970). URL : [https://www.persee.fr/doc/phlou\\_0035-3841\\_1970\\_num\\_68\\_99\\_5562](https://www.persee.fr/doc/phlou_0035-3841_1970_num_68_99_5562), p. 373–384.

thanatophobia, and thus, they justified his characterization of insensitive, reclusive, cruel and sadistic tyrant.

## Conclusion

This journalistic practice of demonizing Abdulhamid, which is nothing but pure disinformation, will leave its mark for a long time. Their articles will serve as a basis and will be used, with a few slight variations, in the book “Abdul-Hamid, the Red Sultan”, published in 1936 under the pseudonym Gilles Roy but, above all, prefaced by Léon Lamouche<sup>43</sup>, who had just published – two years ago and at the same publisher Payot – a “History of Turkey”<sup>44</sup>. I will mention for the record three examples.

I could not conclude without a thought to Francis Bacon<sup>45</sup>:

***“Calumniate boldly, for some of it will stick”.***

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<sup>43</sup> Léon LAMOUCHE (1860-1945), was a graduate from the *École Polytechnique* (class 1880); he studied Russian at the *Special School for Oriental Languages* in Paris (*Langues O'*), where he later took a degree in Turkish and Romanian. As military intelligence officer (*2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau*) of the General Staff of the French Army, he was in charge of Balkan questions (1889-1896), publishing “Bulgaria in the past and the present” (1892). In 1904, he was the chief of staff of General Emilio Degiorgis (1844-1908) who was at the head of the European military mission to reorganize the Ottoman gendarmerie in Macedonia, at Salonica (1904-1909) and in Constantinople (1909-1913). Commander (1914), he commanded the Military Engineers of an infantry division in Lorraine, then served with the Dardanelles as chief of the intelligence service, before retired colonel (1919), he was Consul General of Bulgaria in Paris. He published “The Balkan Peninsula” (1899), “Bulgaria” (1923), “15 Years of Balkan History” (1928), “History of Turkey” (1934), and collaborated in journals. Vice-president of the Comparative Legislation Society, he won many awards (Bulgaria, Italy, and Great Britain). [source : *Bibliothèque centrale de l'École Polytechnique*].

<sup>44</sup> LAMOUCHE (Léon), *Histoire de la Turquie depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*. Préface de René Pinon., Payot, Paris, 1934 (Bibliothèque historique, 1 vol.).

<sup>45</sup> Francisci Baconis de Verulamio. *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), Liber VIII, Cap. II, Parabola 34: “Audacter calumniare, quia semper aliquid adhæret”. Francis BACON. *The advancement of Learning* (1623), Book 8, Chapter 2, Parabola 34.

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